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RULERS PLOTTING



5 MILLION TROOP INVASION TO CONTROL MID-EAST OIL?

By resuming their nuclear program while vowing to “wipe Israel off the map,” Iran’s capitalist ayatollahs have provoked a diplomatic crisis threatening expanded U.S. imperialism-led warfare in the Mid-East. U.S. rulers desperately want the UN Security Council to slap sanctions on the Iranian bosses but are unlikely to get the rulers of China to agree.

China’s bosses view Iran as a major energy source and thus a strategic ally. Iran holds one-tenth of the world’s oil and is the second largest natural gas producer. In late 2004, Beijing and Teheran signed a \$100-billion oil and gas deal. Iran’s nuke move also suits energy-hungry China’s need to weaken U.S. influence in the Middle East.

Washington promises to pursue every diplomatic avenue before resorting to armed force against Iran. But it insists that force may ultimately become necessary. Senator John McCain warned, “The military option is the last option, but cannot be taken off of the table,” because “there’s only one thing worse than the U.S. exercising the military option, that is, a nuclear-armed Iran.” (CBS, 1/15/06)

McCain’s “option” involves U.S. or Israeli air strikes on Iranian nuclear plants. But even before such action, the impasse could spark intensified fighting in Iraq.

Iran’s Capitalist Mullahs ‘Principle Winner’ in Saddam Demise

In a Jan. 12 speech, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former Secretary of State Colin Powell’s chief of staff, said Iran’s Shiite theocracy had exploited the chaos and political vacuum in neighboring Iraq and had become the “principal winner” after the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s regime. “For most purposes, Iranians own the south,” he said, referring to the oil-rich region where Shiites form an overwhelming majority. A harsh U.S. response to Teheran — sanctions or bombing raids — could cause pro-Iranian Shiites in Iraq to rebel against the U.S. presence there.

Should such a scenario cause Iraq to fall into anti-U.S.

hands, the dominant wing of U.S. capitalists envisions a massive re-invasion of the entire Persian Gulf region. On Oct. 19, Col. Wilkerson spoke to an applauding audience at the liberal, Rockefeller- and Soros-funded New America Foundation think-tank. He said, “If we leave [Iraq] in a way that doesn’t leave something there we can trust, we will [have to] mobilize the nation, put five million men and women under arms and go back and take the Middle East within a decade.”

Wilkerson noted that before Gulf War II, Powell had spoken of an all-out invasion targeting Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq that would have taken years to prepare. “We had a discussion in policy planning about actually mounting an operation to take the oilfields in the Middle East, internationalize them, put them under some sort of U.N. trusteeship and administer the revenues and the oil accordingly.” But Bush & Co. pulled the trigger in April 2003, aiming the gun solely at Baghdad.

Niall Ferguson, a Harvard professor and frequent speaker at the Rockefeller-dominated Council on Foreign Relations, thinks the Iran standoff could prove to be “the origin of the next world war,” eventually pitting the U.S. directly against China. He wrote an article in London’s Sunday Telegraph (1/15/06) from the viewpoint of a future historian. It began, “By the beginning of 2006, nearly all the combustible ingredients for a conflict — far bigger in its scale and scope than the wars of 1991 or 2003 — were in place.”

Ferguson pretends to look back on an exchange of nuclear missiles between Iran and Israel in 2007. After that came “the subsequent spread of the conflict as Iraq’s Shiite population overran the remaining American bases in their country and the Chinese threatened to intervene on the side of Teheran.” The only way to avoid such a disaster, says Harvard’s Ferguson, is a pre-emptive U.S. strike against Iran.

Oil is Behind it All

U.S. ruler’s current predicament with Iran and the

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Angry Delphi Workers Show Up Auto Billionaires

DETROIT, MI, Jan. 8 — Today about 500 workers from Detroit, Flint, Saginaw, Toledo, Kokomo and other cities, joined by 20 workers from Windsor, Ontario, demonstrated at the opening of the Detroit International Auto Show. Most were Delphi workers protesting the largest parts supplier’s attempts to cut wages and jobs by two-thirds. The rally also targeted plant closings and health care concessions at GM and Ford, and among Detroit City workers, who also participated.

In one sense, the rally had much in common with the victims of the recent West Virginia mine cave-in. These auto workers are caught in the economic cave-in of a rapidly changing world, poking around in the dark, desperately looking for a way out. The main reason they’re in the dark is because they share much of the political outlook of the UAW leadership. The latter did not even show up or organize anyone to attend, even though UAW headquarters at Solidarity House is just blocks away.

For one thing, there were more American flags than black workers, not a good sign. One young worker carried a sign that said, “Keep the Profits Here at Home.” Another held a sign that read, “Baseball, Hot Dogs, Apple Pie and Chevrolet,” but Chevrolet was written in red Chinese characters.

These workers and others have bought the “big lie” that all the auto manufacturing jobs are leaving the U.S., mainly to China. This is the UAW’s argument, and on the surface it could appear that way. After all, GM just passed Volkswagen as the largest automaker in China and just tripled its investment in India. Meanwhile, it’s closing 12 plants, eliminating 30,000 jobs and ripping concessions out of the hides of active and retired workers here, while Toyota, Mercedes and Hyundai are growing.

But looks can be deceiving. Last year the U.S. market sold 16.9 million cars and trucks produced by 1.1 million autoworkers, which means there are about as many U.S. autoworkers as there were 30 years ago, producing about the same number of cars. But they aren’t mainly Ford and GM workers anymore. GM and Ford are losing market share and the UAW its membership. GM’s share is the lowest since the 1920’s, and the UAW has failed to organize one transplant from Asia or Europe. The parts suppliers are now more than 50% non-union.

As for the GM and Ford jobs in Asia, they didn’t exist before, because there was no market there. All the patriotic “Buy American — Save American Jobs” talk has left the UAW leadership and those that swallow its line, defenseless in a world where cars are produced everywhere, by many players, and the potential markets of China and India draw factories like giant magnets.

This struggle in auto reflects the sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry shaping events in the world. Nationalism, which has never advanced the revolutionary communist movement, is more destructive today than ever. This situation cries out for a mass PLP, from Detroit to Cuautitlan to Beijing, based among industrial workers, and on the principle, “Workers of the World, Unite!” That’s the light that will lead workers out of the darkness and to power. Slowly but surely, with patience and a sense of urgency, that process is underway. ☸

editorial

Profits First, Safety Last Rules the Coal Fields

The death of twelve miners in the Sago Mine was no “accident.” It was the predictable result of billionaire capitalist Wilbur Ross’s cut-it-to-the-bone-and-milk-it-for-all-its-worth management.

The latter is symptomatic of how the U.S. ruling class must attack workers in a period when its need to control oil supplies drives it into imperialist wars in the Middle East, killing tens of thousands of Iraqi workers and U.S. GI’s while sending miners here to an early grave.

Under capitalism’s profit system, even well-run mines are frightening places. The average Appalachian mine seam is less than five feet high. Some barely reach 20 inches!

Generally, coal mines have aged safety equipment and profit from lax enforcement of feeble federal and state “safety” rules. “Almost every...piece of safety equipment is nearly identical to those used more than 20 years ago.” (NY Times, 1/10/06). Had the Sago miners had hand-held radios, they could have been directed safely out of the mine, instead of turning away from the exit because they believed their escape path was blocked — which it was not. Some miners say they must accept unsafe working conditions or become job-

less.

Miners die instantly from roof falls, electrocutions and explosions, as well as from black lung disease, which still slowly kills 1,000 miners annually. The technology to prevent it has been available for 100 years, but Bruce Watzman, VP of the bosses’ National Mining Association arrogantly remarked: “We’re not in the self-rescuer manufacturing business.” (NY Times, 1/10/06)

RECORD OF THE SAGO MINE

Horizon Natural Resources (HNR) had owned several mines, including Sago. With HNR in bankruptcy, in September 2004 a federal bankruptcy judge allowed it to terminate its union contract with the United Mine Workers. Ross’s International Coal Group (ICG) took over the mine last November. (An ICG member had been on Horizon’s Board of Directors.)

An-eleven week safety review of the Sago Mine, ending 12/22/05, revealed 46 violations of federal health and safety rules, including failures to safeguard against roof falls and to control methane. With fines set at \$250 per violation, fines were cheaper than compliance; blood was part of the bottom-line equation.

Ross makes his millions by finding bankrupt industries where workers’ benefits like health coverage and pensions can be shed via bankruptcy courts. Before concentrating on coal, Ross made untold millions off the backs of steel workers. His ISG bought Bethlehem and LTV Steel and was able to lower wage scales and dump health and pension costs. He made deals with the steel workers’ union to stay open, or reopen mills, based on this cheaper labor.

Yet Bruce Raynor (of the UNITE-HERE union and the “Change to Win Coalition”) says, “I really think the future of domestic manufacturing is people like Wilbur Ross.” (NY Magazine)

Murderous conditions will exist in the mines and elsewhere as long as capitalist society exists. Loss of pensions, health coverage and union pay rates are sweeping the U.S. We don’t need a stinking system that forces us to choose between job safety and a job, that won’t provide decent health



care or a secure retirement after lifelong work. Ultimately, only a worker-run communist society is the answer. ☸

Transit Strikers Collided with Rulers’ War Budget

NEWYORK CITY. Jan. 18—“We did not strike to give more and get less, but that’s what happened,” transit worker Richard Watson told the NY Times (1/10) after a meeting called by union president Roger Toussaint to urge workers to accept what amounts to a wage-cut contract agreed to by him and the MTA bosses. There is a lot of anger among NYC’s 33,000 rank-and-file transit workers who are voting on this agreement that ended the militant 3-day strike which shut down the world’s largest transit system.

The proposed 10.5% wage “increase” over 37 months is more than wiped out by the introduction of health care payments, fines of 6-day’s wages and an expected 3.5%-per-year rise in inflation (10.5% over three years).

The fact that the workers defied the anti-strike Taylor Law and refused to sacrifice for the bosses’ war budget turned the strike into a mass political anti-racist struggle — something missing for many years in the U.S.

This defiance of the rulers’ state power scared the bosses, particularly in this age of endless wars and a police state. Once workers start thinking — and acting — against the bosses’ government, they become more open to the communist idea of fighting beyond reforms and for workers’ power. Our Party’s ideas were welcomed by the strikers; thousands of communist leaflets and CHALLENGES were distributed during the strike.

As one worker told a PL’er at a Manhattan bus depot picket line, “The bosses are the real criminals. Look what they did to the Enron, Northwest and GM workers. They cut our wages and steal our benefits and then call us ‘thugs’ for fighting back. Workers are never safe.”

Precisely. No matter how hard workers fight within the limits of capitalism — for reform gains — “workers are never safe” from the bosses’ attacks to take away any gains.

This strike was even more significant occurring as it did during a murderous imperialist war which could cost over a trillion dollars, (see page 4) money which comes from the cutbacks in pen-



sions, wages and health care.

Finally, this strike was forced by an angry, militant rank and file which is predominantly black and Latin, workers who have suffered — and fought against — racism their entire lives. Another reason the bosses are ready to heap lies of “thuggery” and “selfishness” on the strikers: the rulers fear the leadership that black and Latin workers can give to the entire working class — polls indicated 75% of the city’s black workers backed the strikers. The rulers want to split white workers from uniting behind that kind of militant leadership.

After ending the strike with a lousy projected settlement, Toussaint is pushing the rank and file to accept it. Toussaint doesn’t act this way because he fears jail or fines (although that might be a factor). He plays this accommodating, sellout role — as do all the city’s union misleaders who urged him to call off the strike — mainly because he and they defend the capitalist system that is stacked against the working class.

We must support the workers if they do reject this sellout. But most important, workers must realize that as long as the bosses hold state power and control the courts, cops and media, we won’t be free from their racist system of wage slavery. Building a mass communist leadership among workers and fighting for a new society without bosses is the only way out of this dark endless tunnel. Putting into practice the red politics in CHALLENGE is the answer to imperialist war. ☸

Mid-East Invasion?

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scarcity of available responses underscore a shift in military policy born of political weakness. From 1953 to 1979, the U.S. relied on its “twin pillars,” Iran and Israel, to police its Mid-East oil empire. But ever since the U.S. has had to use its own troops.

The U.S. had installed the Shah of Iran in a CIA-backed coup and armed his regime to the teeth. But when the ayatollahs grabbed state power (and oil) for themselves, Jimmy Carter uttered his famous doctrine: Persian Gulf oil was a “vital interest” of the United States; the U.S. would counter any nation’s attempt to seize it with direct military action. Carter began, and Reagan continued, a huge U.S. naval build-up in the Gulf. Bush, Sr. sent 700,000 U.S. troops into Kuwait and Iraq. Clinton ordered the Air Force to bomb Iraq. Bush, Jr. invaded Iraq again. Now, with the old pillars threatening to annihilate each other, U.S. rulers are compelled to contemplate the mobilization of 5,000,000 soldiers.

The scenarios above may or may not come to pass. Nevertheless, the various nations’ rulers’ ruthless competition for oil’s “geopolitical leverage” make them plausible. We can’t predict specific events. But we can and must constantly point out that when imperialists prattle about diplomacy in public, behind the scenes they’re planning for war. Putting into practice the red politics in CHALLENGE is the answer to imperialist war. ☸

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

’Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead:” capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.

’Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

’Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society’s benefits and burdens.

’Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

’Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers. Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.

’Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

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Auto Makers' Rivalry Fires Thousands at Mexico Ford

CUAUTITLAN, MEXICO — Recently current and laid-off Ford workers met with PLP members here. We remembered previous struggles we waged with whistles and yells; we opposed Ford's attempts to get us to support their production plans that would mean more layoffs and increased workloads. One worker recalled disagreeing with us then, believing that Ford's plans would bring more jobs.

Now he sees we were right. The company's plans made more workers jobless, and subjected those remaining to huge workloads. He said workloads and hours are so difficult that sometimes he wants to quit, even though jobs are scarce.

In 1990 there were almost 7,000 Ford workers at the Cuautitlan plant. Today about 500 remain, working under increasingly brutal workloads with less benefits.

These workers, and many others, know that the auto industry is in a worldwide crisis and that the only way Ford can survive is by exploiting workers to the maximum. They also understand that unemployment and exploitation are increasing as Ford, Volkswagen, GM, Nissan, Toyota and all the world's auto companies fight for markets, resources and cheap labor,

from North America to China.

"The most important thing is our people" — that's always been Ford's hypocritical cry, but the only thing these bosses and all capitalists really care about is maximizing profits. That's the essence of capitalism and is evident in the countless arbitrary technical shutdowns and the layoffs of thousands of workers. In 1990 there were almost 7,000 Ford workers at the Cuautitlan plant. Today about 500 remain, working under increasingly brutal workloads with less benefits.

Recently Ford announced it was closing six plants in North America, including the bus assembly plant here, eliminating 30,000 jobs in all. This is the result of fierce international competition, especially from Asian rivals like Toyota, which is grabbing a large market share from GM and Ford in the rich North American market. GM, still the world's largest auto company, is closing 12 plants and also eliminating 30,000 jobs.

Ford's new management reorganization will cut another 4,000 salaried jobs. The auto bosses' competition for market share is sharpening. To stay in the race, Ford must convince workers to support its production changes. The bosses know the only way to survive is to super-exploit the workers, here and worldwide. Supporting the bosses' production plans won't guarantee our jobs. Even workers who were company favorites also lost their jobs.



Delphi workers protest at auto show, see front page

We can't expect the sellouts who run the union to defend us, since they always defend Ford. In the long run, the bosses will resolve their crisis of overproduction and sharpening competition through war, using racism as their main weapon.

As long as capitalism exists, our lives will be subject to the decisions of the bosses and of their competition for maximum profits. That's why the working class needs to organize in a mass international PLP.

We plan to spread CHALLENGE to more workers here. This way, we can show how economic crises and the bosses' fascism expose their system, which will build revolutionary communist consciousness among workers. We must destroy this system of exploitation and build a communist society which eliminates wages, bosses, racism, sexism, nationalism and the crisis of overproduction. "Long Live Communism!" ☸

Hektoen Medical Workers' Strike Defies Union Hacks

CHICAGO, IL Jan. 11 — Today about 120 Hektoen workers took part in a one-day strike at the CORE Center, across the street from Stroger Cook County Hospital. About 30 County workers, also in contract negotiations, joined the picket lines on their lunch break.

The Hektoen strike is a continuation of what could be the start of something big. It follows on the heels of the three-day NYC transit walkout, where 34,000 black, Latin and white workers waged an illegal strike against attacks on their pensions and health care. It continues a mini-strike wave at Lockheed, Boeing, Northwest Airline mechanics and others. It follows a demonstration of almost 500 GM-Delphi workers at the open-

'More workers are in a fighting mood . . .'

ing of the Detroit Auto Show, and could set the stage for a bigger strike of County and Hektoen workers together.

More workers are in a fighting mood as a result of the deteriorating oil war in Iraq, the mass racist terror that is following Hurricane Katrina and the endless attacks on health care, pensions, wages and jobs. Hektoen workers are striking against racist budget cuts, aimed mainly at the patients they serve. They're refusing to accept a war contract that attacks their own health care while they're on the front lines of the fight against HIV/AIDS and TB, diseases that thrive on racism and capitalist poverty. Hektoen is funded mainly by CDC (Center for Disease Control) grants which are being diverted away from public health to Homeland Security bio-terrorism.

To reach this one-day strike, Hektoen workers overwhelmingly rejected a tentative

agreement between SEIU Local 20 and the bosses and then voted almost unanimously to authorize a strike. The bosses imposed the rejected contract, and the union leadership has thrown obstacles in the workers' path every step of the way.

The union gave Hektoen a 10-day strike notice, so they could rearrange their clinic appointments. The notice had a typographical error, dated January 2005 instead of 2006, so two days before the strike management told workers the strike was "unauthorized." The union leaders then informed the strike committee that, "We don't have the laws on our side; there's the possibility that workers might be fired."

The workers shot back, "We're not asking for permission. The strike is on!"

The day before, the local president tried to convince us to "reschedule" the strike, but we weren't buying it. The real leadership has emerged from the workplace, not the downtown union offices.

The strike was very spirited. Every picketer received a PLP leaflet and many got CHALLENGE. The union has no plan to get the bosses back to table. They're hoping we'll draw the wrong conclusions and say, "See, there's nothing more we can do," and accept the imposed contract. We see it as the beginning of a long struggle that can escalate to a strike of County and Hektoen workers together against racist budget cuts that are financing the \$6 billion-a-month war in Iraq. We want a world where our patients will not have to beg for health care and the workers that serve them will not fear getting sick because treatment is unaffordable.

In order to reach that point, we need more workers reading and distributing CHALLENGE, more attending PLP events and participating in other struggles. We have a long road ahead of us, but we're on the right track. ☸

Could Transit Bosses' Plans Be Any Clearer?

"This is from the transit company website. Take a look." A worker held out a copy of a Board of Directors' agenda item authorizing over half a million dollars for a labor consultant to help the transit bosses negotiate three contracts expiring this summer. Everyone understood the company wasn't spending the money to increase our wages and benefits. So much for the illusion that management would leave us alone, after provoking strikes over pensions and medical in the last two contracts.

RAISING COMMUNIST IDEAS

A week later many workers watched the New York City strike. One asked, "This is going to affect us, isn't it?" Several workers wanted to meet to discuss the latest developments in southern California and on the East Coast.

At previous meetings we've tried to connect the sacrifices forced on workers at United Airlines, GM and Delphi to the competition U.S. companies face globally, as well as discussing the war budget. With the holidays approaching a meeting was set up right after Christmas lunch.

The bus was over half full as 20 workers discussed the gutsy transit workers who broke the anti-strike law in New York. A friend brought copies of a PLP flier supporting the strikers. We put one inside CHALLENGE for everyone on the bus.

We discussed the serious situation we're in. "If the company is in trouble, maybe we should ask for nothing in the new contract and just try to hold on to what we've got," a concerned worker commented. "At least until the war is over and the economic picture improves." This man has a newborn son. Someone asked, "How old do you think your baby boy might be by the time things will have turned around for the USA?"

The Party's aim is to make crystal clear to workers the depths to which U.S. bosses are preparing to drive us to maintain their world dominance. They must wage war wherever their profit interests are threatened — espe-

cially in the Middle East — for many years to come. The profit system makes imperialist war inevitable. We aim to help mobilize workers to fight these coming attacks with a clear view of the stakes in this fight

'GREATEST THREAT TO AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE'? MEDICARE!

And how will imperialism's "vast military deployments" be paid for? U.S. rulers and their liberal politicians want "American taxpayers to keep paying for it... Either social security and Medicare shrink or the Pentagon shrinks." (Foreign Affairs column, New York Times, 1/4/06) Could the big bosses spell out their war plans any more clearly?

A system planning to sacrifice so many for the profit of so few should not continue to exist. Only the working class armed with communist ideas in the factories, in mass transit that carries millions to their jobs in the large cities and revolutionary soldiers in the military can take power from this murderous class of capitalist billionaires. We can organize a revolution. From the black smoke and blood of their oil wars we can build a communist world.

Workers will take communist ideas as their own by steadily increasing the number of CHALLENGE networks of readers and sellers, and using these ideas to sharpen the class and political struggle against the union misleaders. With transit workers asking for more meetings and more workers reading CHALLENGE, the way forward is becoming clearer. ☸

Bankers Steal Workers’ Pensions to Make Profits, War

Whether it is an Enron-type crisis or a New York City transit strike, we’re now forced to look at pension systems we once thought only experts could analyze.

Two things stand out immediately. First, if wealth is power, these pension funds show the working class might very well be sitting atop a Mount Everest of potential power. But in reality it shows workers having as much power as a snowball in hell. The contrast couldn’t be sharper.

In “Banking on Death,” Robin Blackburn writes, “There are thousands of pension funds worth over \$1 billion [each], with dozens in the United States worth more than Bill Gates.” Pension funds account for over half the value of the world’s stock markets — some \$13 trillion! Never mind having “a voice at the table,” as the AFL-CIO keeps begging for; with wealth like this we should control the table!

In reality, of course, we control next to nothing. Investment bankers and brokers (capitalists or their close friends) manage our funds and, through a battery of legalities, strip the policyholder of any influence.

In the 1980’s and early ’90’s, for example, these funds were used to finance junk bonds. A type of speculator, known as a corporate raider, would buy a profitable company. The aim wasn’t to run the company but to cash in by selling off its operations as quickly as possible. Since these speculators lacked sufficient

funds to buy these companies outright, they borrowed huge sums from other (institutional) investors. Pension funds were a ready source.

Often the end result of these corporate raids would be that a big company is broken up into smaller franchises. With each sale, the

junk bondsman would skim off a profit and repay part of the loan from the institutional investor. Each new owner of a smaller franchise, of course, would look for a new labor contract, leading to worker layoffs, cuts in wages and benefits, speed-up and so on. The Greyhound strike of the 1980’s grew from one of these junk-bond raids. In short, pension funds were mobilized to impoverish the working class.

This money could have been used to build subsidized housing, recreation centers, or health clinics for retired members. Nothing says they must be invested in the stock market. Nothing, that is, except the relative absence of communist ideas, which point out how workers should develop political goals in our own interests. The fact is the bosses’ legal system makes sure vast sums of money are never put at the disposal of the working

class. In part, that’s why the rulers worry so much over who sits on the Supreme Court.

How these funds are used has now become more acute. Today, pensions have surfaced as an issue because U.S. capitalism must pay for a costly series of imperialist wars. The main capitalist grouping can no longer afford to put these vast sums at the disposal of just any capitalist or corporate raider. Today, they must be channeled into the government’s war coffers.

Yesterday, our pension funds — controlled by capitalists — were used to finance the impoverishment of millions. Now they will be used to finance the murder of millions. Some might say that even our retirement plans make a powerful argument for communist revolution. ☸

PENSIONS AND THE TRILLION-DOLLAR WAR

The demand by the NYC transit bosses to make pensions more costly for the workers highlighted the claim nationally by governments and private employers that pension costs are skyrocketing. They want to cut back, eliminate or replace workers’ pensions with 401(k)s — which absolve employers from committing to defined future pension payouts. NYC’s Mayor Bloomberg wants to cut or make pensions more costly for all city workers.

But who created this “crisis”?

In 1981 pension payments claimed 24% of NYC’s budget. In 2000, it had sunk to ONE percent! Huge returns from pension fund investments in a booming stock market led many local and state governments and private bosses to stop contributing to pension funds.

At the height of the boom, NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani diverted more than \$800 million from the pension system to finance tax cuts. But even as City Hall stopped paying, workers still were required to fork over at least 3% of their wages into the pension system.

Starting in 2003, when the City increased its pension contributions, it still amounted to only 8% of the total budget, one-third

of the 1981 percentage.

So when the bosses cry “broke” on pensions, they’re hiding the fact that they didn’t pay anywhere near their share for nearly two decades. Now they expect the workers to make up the difference for this robbery, or take a huge cut in their pensions for which they worked all their lives on promises they were living the “American Dream.”

Yes, nationally there’s a big pension problem, created by a system dependent on the boom-and-bust stock market for income and the bosses’ commitment to financing a trillion-dollar expense for imperialist war. Conservative columnist Paul Craig Robert questioned the competency of the White House “when a \$70 billion war [in Iraq] became a \$2 trillion war.” These figures are based on a recent study by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (Columbia U.) and Linda Bilmes (Harvard).

Where will they get these trillions? Even as they borrow hundreds of billions (incurring huge interest to bondholders for those loans), to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and balance the budget, look out private and public pensions, Social Security, Medicare and workers’ wages! Capitalism always takes its profits and war costs out of workers’ hides. ☸

Ideas in CHALLENGE Lead to Factory Workers’ Class Struggle

About 40 workers in my factory, angry over the amount of “mandatory” overtime forced on us, confronted our shop manager. When 40 workers stop production for an hour, the boss realizes we’re not producing profits. Our immediate goal was met: the hours were reduced, temporarily. But the important lesson here is that profits are the bosses’ only concern. When the workers collectively stood together in solidarity, the bosses had to listen.

One worker close to me said, “This is all because of you.” This was good in the sense that when the bosses attack, workers know to turn to the ideas of PL. But I pointed out there was one woman in particular who really took charge and made sure that everyone responded. She realized it takes more than one person to pull off something like this. Even one of the bosses’ snitches told me he had never seen this before.

My club’s main focus has been increasing ties and winning more CHALLENGE readers among industrial workers, with the goal of building unity around communist ideas. Since we average 60 hours per week at work, not a lot of people were easily able to find time to socialize with co-workers off the job. However, a group has begun to take shape, although development within the group is uneven.

One worker, Chris, was pretty quiet and didn’t seem to trust too many people. But after a few discussions we ate breakfast after work one morning, to hang out. Once outside the workplace it was easier to become better acquainted. We’ve now been to each other’s homes several times for dinner. He invited me to go camping with him, another co-worker, and a large family that does this annually.

While there we talked about the war, Katrina (which happened while we were camping), and about how children are raised under capitalism. This enabled me to introduce him to CHALLENGE. He didn’t snatch it right out

of my hands, but he didn’t run away either.

After numerous discussions of the Party’s ideas since then, Chris gladly takes a copy every issue. Now I take him two copies because the last time I asked him about an article he said he hadn’t read it, adding, “My wife took it.”

Since then, after many pot lucks on the job, picnics in the park and dinners with more workers, friendships have developed based on respect and trust. Thanks to these relationships and workers’ class anger, those 40 workers confronted the boss.

Chris and I were both facing the contradiction between the individual and the collective. My commitment to intensify my political work sharpened this contradiction, indicating that I hadn’t been making the Party primary.

Chris cynically viewed people as “lazy,” which was why “they didn’t move up.” He said if he was able to “move up on his own” it meant anyone could “if they weren’t so lazy.” When I asked him how he reached his position, he told me how a co-worker stuck her neck out for him, talking to the head of that department, and still had to convince the boss to give him a shot.

It was easy to point out that he hadn’t gotten the position by himself. Then I asked him if he thought the shop could exist if everyone “moved up” to his position and no one was left to do the other jobs. This is one of many conversations that have led to him participating in more collective activities, such as the pot lucks and the picnics.

We both have a long way to go, but with time, practice and consistent evaluation we can build a bigger network of CHALLENGE readers/sellers/writers as a stepping stone to our bigger goal of recruiting to the Party and building for communist revolution. These practical experiences have convinced me of the need and the possibilities of increasing this CHALLENGE network.

300 Anti-Racists Protest Fascist ‘Minutemen’

GLENDALE, CA.,

Jan. 7 — PLP members joined about 300 people to demonstrate against the racist Minutemen who were protesting a day laborers’ center across the street from Home Depot here. Many laborers joined the action.



The angry protestors confronted the Minutemen. They saw clearly how racist provocateur Joe Tuner would station himself amid a group of demonstrators as five or more police squad cars would pull up ready to arrest anyone who laid a hand on him. This led many (who we didn’t know) to take up the chant, “The cops, the courts, the Minutemen, all are part of the bosses’ plan.”

This was the title of our PLP leaflet which detailed the role of the Minutemen in helping the rulers push for more “border security” as part of Homeland Security. In addition, coming immigration bills will be advanced as “helping” immigrants get on the “road to legalization” which, for many, will include joining the military. Over 100 demonstrators took CHALLENGE, including many of the day laborers. The crowd took up the class-conscious chants of “Las luchas obreras no tienen fronteras” and “La clase obrera no tiene frontera.” (Workers’ and their struggles have no borders.)

We also talked with many about the coming trial of two anti-racists facing a racist frame-up for protesting the speech of Minuteman leader Jim Gilchrist at a meeting of the infamous CCIR (California Coalition for Immigration Reform, initiator of Proposition 187 and racist attacks on immigrants for decades). At that one, known racist Hal Netkin ran his car into demonstrators and wasn’t charged with any crime, while anti-racists face felonies for merely protesting.

Unionists, churchgoers, students and teachers are all raising money to help defend these anti-racists. (More next issue) ☸

D.C. Winter Project Advances Communist Goals

WASHINGTON, D.C. — This area's youth leadership led a Winter Project during semester break to develop ourselves through intense study and by spreading communist ideas. We wanted to counter the ruling-class ideological domination of our high schools and colleges by building the Party and strengthening our knowledge. We had to confront the contradiction between reform and revolutionary work: building a mass party capable of seizing state power, destroying its incorrigible institutions and keeping it communist.

The Metro Transit Struggle

Metro workers helped lead discussions about revolutionary ideas related to the NY transit strike. Armed with CHALLENGE and a flyer tying the NY strike to D.C., four of us spoke about communism to Metro workers at bus stops. We then rode the bus driven by a comrade who gave us a tour of his route, explaining gentrification, racism

and police brutality while we distributed literature to welcoming riders. Our driver comrade remarked on how he could see everyone reading CHALLENGE in his rear view mirror, and said, "It's beautiful. I wish you all could see what I see right now." One woman was so enthused by the paper that she said we need

to get this information into her church. She gave us the name of her church and its pastor, and encouraged us to distribute literature there.

The Hampton Struggle and the MLA

Hampton University students told their story of repression by academic officials (see CHALLENGE, 1/4). As a result of a reform-versus-revolution discussion, they're considering developing a paper distribution and discussion network in their dorms. The Winter Project also supported our comrades in the Modern Languages Association by agitating outside the convention, handing out 400 PL flyers specifically targeting the MLA issues, and selling 60 CHALLENGES.

Stalin and the Soviet Union

Some interested students requested a

discussion of the Stalin-era USSR. Based on several readings, PLP's position became much clearer. PLP rejected the cult of the individual decades ago. Our job is to advance communist theory and practice to the working class, not glorify some "great man." PL is often labeled "Stalinist" because we insist that anti-communist lies and distortions about the period when Stalin led the Soviet Union are vicious attempts by the ruling class and its intellectual lapdogs to keep workers oppressed by hiding their true history. We're proud of this position! We defend the Stalin-era government for its many achievements, while criticizing its errors. The Stalin-era USSR developed under incredible pressure from the imperialist powers, a crucial fact that is often ignored in the ruling-class accounts of the "purges." In fact, these "purges" rid the communist government of collaborators and saboteurs, and helped make possible the defeat of Hitler, in sharp contrast with the "quislings" (traitors) roaming free in Western Europe, softening those countries for the Nazi conquest.

Membership in the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Several students from the Project are seriously considering joining PLP. We argued that building a revolutionary com-



munist party is the only thing that will permanently destroy capitalism. PL membership means agreeing in general with the Party's analysis of the world and of revolutionary strategy, and agreeing to engage in struggle over the development of the line to better destroy capitalism; selling CHALLENGE-DESAFIO — the Party's primary organ of communication and network-building; engaging in mass organizations while advancing PL's ideas; donating money to help sustain the Party; and accepting and upholding democratic centralism, the means by which the party works.

We moved a number of young people closer to the Party, and removed some obstacles that hold them back from fully understanding and committing to our ideas, and to the only party with truly revolutionary goals, for a society of, by and for the working class!✊

Red Professors Fight for PLP's Ideas at MLA Convention

PLP members of the Modern Languages Association (MLA) brought communist ideas to the group's annual convention by fighting for and winning militant resolutions developed by the Radical Caucus, and by providing revolutionary Marxist analyses of literature and current educational policy in many of the sessions. The MLA is the world's largest association of academics, bringing together English, Literature and Language college teachers and graduate students from around the world. One successful resolution committed the MLA to oppose the "Academic Bill of Rights" (a transparent right-wing assault on campus leftists led by the notorious David Horowitz) and to defend professors who oppose capitalism, exploitation and imperialism in their classes.

Over 10,000 professors, teachers, and graduate students attended this year's December convention, mostly women presenting research findings and trying to get decent-paying, full-time jobs. Few attendees were black or Latin. The capitalist cut-back attacks on higher education has meant fewer working-class students in college, more badly paid, part-time teaching jobs, super-exploited graduate student labor and harsher discipline against all teachers.

These real-life conditions have led most attendees to understand that liberal Democratic Party "answers" won't change things, but they do not yet see the possibility of a radically different society, a communist society, led by the working class, in which racism, sexism, imperialist war and poverty would be abolished by ending exploitation. This was our special contribution to the conference.

PL members and friends sold CHALLENGE both inside and outside the convention, and

discussed PLP's more profound goals with colleagues. In the open debate and struggle over resolutions, PLP'ers rejected the classless slogan of "academic freedom" advanced by liberals, noting that the slogan, like "free speech," is often used by racists and anti-communists to cover up their building of fascist movements and their attacks on workers and communists. PLP believes that racism and fascism must be crushed in all forms, including suppressing the speech and writings of racists and fascists.

PLP'ers also argued that "the right to unionize" will get workers only so far since it accepts the limits of working within — and ultimately defending — capitalism. As long as the capitalists hold state power, than they can always (and do) turn around the reforms that workers may wrench from them. Instead, PLP'ers explained how the present attacks in the U.S. are endemic to capitalism, a part of the growing racist repression for which "fascism" is the only appropriate word, and that fundamental revolutionary change is needed for liberation.

While the MLA will never be a revolutionary organization, it is one vehicle of struggle against capitalist, anti-communist and racist ideas, a kind of "school for communism." The next step is to win more of our professor friends to take revolutionary ideas onto their campuses and into their classrooms to strengthen the fight against imperialism and war.✊



El Salvador: Youth Take Lead At School for Red Politics

EL SALVADOR — "It's my first experience hearing what communism offers the working class," said one of the CHALLENGE readers who was meeting in a PLP-led discussion group. "The FMLN teaches you only how to paint signs and put up electoral propaganda."

"For the first time, I feel very good sharing my ideas with you about how I think work should be carried out under a communist system," said another comrade, a textile worker. "I've been around religious groups, the FMLN and in all of them I've only seen corruption and tricks for the workers."

"This is what the working class needs," said a young comrade who reviewed his experiences in an electoral party before joining PLP.

This group of comrades, mostly youth, met in the country's most beautiful mountains to discuss three points: (1) An international report given by a Party leader; (2) Dialectical Materialism, led by a university student; and (3) writing for CHALLENGE, led by a comrade responsible for editing letters and articles for the paper.

Farm workers and city workers, teachers and university students all expressed satisfaction at being there. It was a festive day for all the youth from many cities. They listened to music, some hearing Bella Ciao and the Internationale for the first time. They asked to reproduce the CD's in order to share them and listen to them in their clubs. Some brought guitars and sang protest songs from Latin American groups.

Those who had traveled far to get there were very enthusiastic, never tired or bored. There were serious moments — including criticism and self criticism — but also time to see a beautiful river.

In discussing the international report,

one youth related the situation in the country to the Free Trade Agreement between El Salvador and the U.S. This sparked a broader discussion about the growing fight between the US, China and the European Union and how this affects El Salvador's working class.

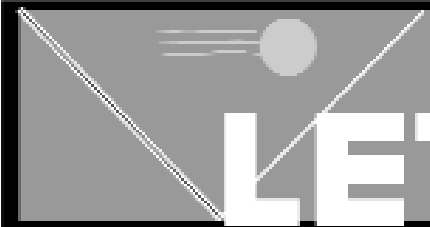
The comrade who led the discussion on dialectical materialism was well-prepared. Before the meeting he said, "I'm really worried because I'm still learning this material myself." A leader told him, "Prepare, but remember that the discussion is collective and you'll be giving the introduction."

The presentation went very well, becoming more profound in relating dialectics to theory but also its application to everyone's daily life. This shows how these young workers, farm workers and students can use dialectics to analyze reality. When one of the youngest participants was questioned about whether she understood the importance of contradictions and deciding which was the main one, she replied "For me, the main contradiction is the internal, since if I'm not convinced of the Party's ideas, how can I convince others."

A CHALLENGE reader noted, "Here I'm seeing the importance of involving our children in political discussion. They learn more quickly and won't be as easily contaminated by capitalism as we were."

The last point concerned the importance of writing for CHALLENGE, that it isn't only informative, but is a tool for organizing the Party.

At the end, everyone took responsibility for spreading communist ideas in their mass organizations, and in organizing more groups to read and distribute CHALLENGE.✊



Send Letters to CHALLENGE PERIODICALS,
PO 808, Brooklyn NY 11202
or email, cd188@juno.com

Katrina: Face of U.S. Fascism

Recently, my partner and I spent three days in New Orleans, viewing the devastation first hand and working in the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Committee. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been uprooted in ways unimaginable. Four months after Katrina, 30,000 people are still living in temporary housing. FEMA is paying hotels \$150 a night to house people, instead of seeking permanent housing solutions. On February 7, those subsidies will end and thousands will be out on the street.

While we were there, a Quality Inn hotel attempted to evict Katrina survivors. We were able to get the eviction postponed, through political and legal efforts. About 100 people, called on short notice, protested at the hotel and spoke with residents, many of whom had no place to go but the streets. The hotel wanted to kick people out; Mardi Gras season was approaching. Driving through the French Quarter, you'd never know about the devastation just a short distance away. Tourists in the Quarter partied as if the hurricane had never happened.

Meanwhile, in the lower 9th ward, where 14,000 mostly poor African-American people had lived, the whole area was uninhabitable. Block after block of rubble, stench from the accumulation of wastes, no electricity, gas, or water, and no FEMA trailers for people to use while rebuilding their homes.

One look at the levee shows why. The part of the levee alongside this neighborhood (and other poor neighborhoods) is less than two feet wide and made of non-reinforced cement. It was no match for the huge surges of water which easily broke through it. In contrast, the levee protecting the French Quarter is a steel-reinforced, half-block wide street with hotels and shopping centers atop it.

During a community meeting in the lower 9th ward, residents spoke passionately about the lack of responsiveness of all levels of government. The Army Corp of Engineers had begun bulldozing the area, making no attempt to contact owners of the houses they planned to demolish. They were stopped temporarily when about 100 people surrounded the bulldozers and threatened to make a "citizens arrest" based on a Temporary Restraining Order granted earlier.

In New Orleans, lives have been devastated by a capitalist system that cares more about profits and oil wars than people's needs. Over 100,000 people were left in New Orleans to die, and they surely would have if the hurricane had hit directly. Still, thousands were killed by the breaking of the "sand-castle" levees by the water Katrina stirred up. Fascism is not too strong a word to describe the utter disregard the system is showing for the lives of our New Orleans brothers and sisters.

One of the most striking aspects of our visit was the hundreds of volunteers, from college students to retired people, from all over the continent. Between these volunteers and the thousands of black and white working-class New Orleanians angry at the government, there are many opportunities to organize and help out. All CHALLENGE readers should seriously consider either going to New Orleans, helping to support work in your city, or in other ways spreading the word and contributing to this important anti-racist fight.

The volunteers and New Orleans residents I met during our short stay were extremely open to PLP's ideas about capitalism and communism. I think our Party should go to New Orleans with as many people and for as long

as is feasible, given the other important work we're doing. The face of U.S. fascism is clearest right now in New Orleans, and we need to be there to point workers and students in the direction of communist revolution as the only solution.

MIDWEST READER

Capitalism Holds New Orleans by the Throat

Some may ask, "Why didn't all of the people evacuate when told to do so?" We have been through so many hurricane threats that we didn't know which one to take seriously. Besides that, our rulers told us that since the devastating Hurricane Betsy of 1965, our levee system was built in such a way to protect us from anything. They lied.

There were some people who could not leave New Orleans to flee to safety. I saw them taken out of their houses by helicopter a day after the storm. Some were dead.

Did we make a "choice" to stay? Yes. I did because my old 1986 Toyota would never have made it. I also based my "choice" on what our city rulers had told us over the years.

If we had mass transit out of the city, I would have left. But where were our city buses? All neatly parked in the bus yard...

The ultimate question is: Could this happen again? YES, YES, YES! If you fly over the New Orleans area you'll see a city surrounded by water. But there's money to be made by having a city like New Orleans. The tourist industry rakes in millions each year, especially off the backs of tens of thousands of black people who are kept poverty-stricken by this racist system. The greedy claw of capitalism holds New Orleans by the throat and won't let go. It'll be interesting to see if, and why, New Orleans will be rebuilt.

You'll notice I now have a Houston address. I'm not going back to N.O. I will return when it's safe (not now) and see if I can salvage anything out of my apartment. Stay there? No.

The greed also comes in the form of the New Orleans Energy Co. and the South Central Bell Telephone Co. They both sent me bills for services during the hurricane. I phoned them both and called them capitalist swine! They both have transferred my bill to a collection agency. I got a letter from one agency. I called and told a lady the whole truth about their bill. She seemed to understand that, at the moment, I have no means of support. But capitalism doesn't know the word "compassion." They're not sitting or swimming in water. Perhaps they should be!

RED READER

P.S. — I've enclosed two recent pictures of the New Orleans that Mayor Ray Nagin wants us to return to. He's come to Houston twice to ask us to return. I hit him with an egg on his bald head.

Profiteering From Hurricane Victims

The holiday season and last year's devastating worldwide "natural disasters" have inspired the collective desire to help the working class's suffering members to become stronger than ever. But the bosses are taking advantage of workers' class instincts to help each other and are using volunteer service to eliminate the need for state aid. Their manipulation and exploitation is often difficult to detect. As a social service employee and PLP member, I've spent many hours leading many disgruntled workers in my organization to oppose such exploitative demands.

Following Hurricane Katrina, a non-profit



organization — NCR — established a toll-free hotline number to place victims in new housing. NCR operates through private rental payments and funds from the Office on Housing and Urban Development to manage housing projects for low-income seniors in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Advertised on CNN, through FEMA and the Red Cross, the NCR hotline received much publicity for its "outstanding service to hurricane victims." Potential callers were informed that they would reach "trained housing specialists" to help them relocate and establish new and better lives.

But the truth about the NCR hotline is not so glamorous. To staff this housing hotline the organization mandates my fellow social service employees and me to drop our current caseloads of 50-100 low-income seniors to answer hotline calls. We weren't trained as "housing specialists" and the company e-mail suggests we use internet resources such as Yahoo, Craigslist, and Santa-for-Seniors to meet the complicated needs of hurricane victims. In addition, the organization emphatically states that it's "God's mission" for the mostly part-time staff to work through evenings and weekends without pay. Super-exploitation at its finest!

I've struggled with many co-workers to view the Katrina disaster as a failure of the racist capitalist system, and to see that NCR's opportunist hotline is a lose-lose situation for all workers: the social service workers are super-exploited, their current senior caseload needs are neglected and Hurricane Katrina victims are once again screwed by the system. The only winners are the NCR bosses whose profits increase as hotline publicity spreads nationwide to win them more housing contracts.

To date, the hotline has received 724 calls and has only placed 46 individuals in housing units, failure even by capitalist standards. This proves that workers don't benefit from the opportunist activities of private enterprise. What the homeless Hurricane Katrina victims, along with all oppressed workers, do need is organized communist leadership. Without the drive for profits, workers could be given centralized training and resources to assist disaster victims efficiently and effectively. To achieve this, PLP continues to build a base among the working class at work, in the military, in school, at church and in our neighborhoods to fight for real revolutionary change.

NEW JERSEY COMRADE

Murders of Miners Have Long History

I've lived most of my life in the Western Pennsylvania coal fields, and some of my relatives and friends worked in the mines, so I'm very aware that this is a dangerous occupation.

The coal bosses' murder of 12 miners in West Virginia last month (see CHALLENGE (1/19)) is not just a recent development. Historically, U.S. coal bosses have murdered hundreds, if not thousands of miners over the

years. In 1942, 63 miners were trapped in an explosion caused by a build-up of carbon monoxide or "black damp" at the Sonman mine near Portage, Pa., a stone's throw from Johnstown. When rescue workers reached the miners, they were already dead. The former said many of the victims appeared to be sleeping. Some had written brief letters to their loved ones, one scrawling "I love you" on his lunch pail.

The Portage Historical Society made a video about this tragedy, titled "63 Men Down"; the actors were all local people. An investigation proved that the coal bosses were the culprits in this disaster. Initially they claimed they had checked for carbon monoxide gas, attempting to compel an employee to testify he had done so. But the latter refused and was fired.

Eventually the truth came out, provoking an outpouring of righteous anger at the mine owners. Today, there's a statue of a miner on Portage's Main Street to honor these workers.

But the capitalist USA is not the only country in which coal mining is a dangerous occupation. In capitalist China, 5,000 miners were killed in privately-owned mines last year. So miners in the U.S. and China have a common enemy: the capitalist system. Only a communist revolution that leads to a true workers' state and workers' power will ensure that coal mining, and all other jobs for that matter, will be safe. It's clear that attempts to reform capitalism don't cut the mustard.

RED COAL

Transit Workers in U.S. and Iran: Same Enemy, Same Fight

My co-workers and I have had many conversations about world events and workers' struggles. Recently we discussed the NY transit strike and the fines and threats of jail for workers and their leaders; the attack on retirement benefits of public workers; the recent jailing of transit union officials in Tehran, Iran; and the subsequent strike of 9,000 bus drivers which appears to have won the release of those leaders.

Someone brought in an article detailing U.S. military and diplomatic preparations for attacking Iran in 2006, and it seems like transit workers in both countries are being attacked as part of those war preparations.

Though, I know little of Iran's transit workers' history, it appears that an attack on an independent organization like their union would be consistent with silencing potential opposition to the leading clergy's regional ambitions. In the U.S., with all parts of society totally in debt, the curtailing of retirement benefits to the largest generation of retirees in history would be a way of paying for past, present and future wars.

I believe it was Mao who said that for the U.S., or any other country's ruling class, to attack other countries it had first to attack the workers within its own borders even harder. Since what most workers want is a decent and stable life, and these ruling classes

continued on page 7

have just the opposite planned for us, this might be a good reason for workers in both countries to build solidarity and connections.

AN INTERNATIONALIST

EVOLUTION: A MATERIALIST BREAKTHROUGH

The recent column, “What Will Science Be Like Under Communism,” [CHALLENGE, 01/04/06] acknowledges the importance of Darwin’s “powerful” and “confirmed” theory of evolution, including the central role of natural selection. However, the article might give the impression that PLP opposes this theory. For example, it says “[evolutionary theory] partly reflects the capitalist social relationships of Victorian England — a highly individualistic society, marked by workers competing for jobs subservient to capitalist exploiters competing for profits.... Not all relationships among members of a species or between members of different species are competitive.... In today’s capitalist society, similar false ideas are passed off as ‘objective science.’”

Natural selection is a materialist explanation for evolutionary change among living organisms. Certain small changes in an animal (or plant) — changes that arise largely by chance — give that animal a reproductive advantage over similar animals without those changes. Reproductive means that the population of slightly-changed animals produces more offspring than the population of unchanged ones.

There can be several reasons for this advantage: the changed animals compete successfully for food with the unchanged animals; the changed animals are better able to fight off predators from another species; or the changed animals are better able to adapt to changes in the environment. Eventually the small changes become permanent in this animal population.

Natural selection is a biological process. Capitalist competition is a social process. The laws of capitalism — discovered by Marx and Engels — should not be confused with the laws of evolution. True, some writers following Herbert Spencer in the 19th century, promoted the pseudo-scientific “social Darwinist” idea that the competition and poverty of capitalism is “explained” by the laws of evolution. Darwin, however, didn’t deal with this, and the theory of evolution has nothing to do with how capitalism works.

We should be careful to distinguish the false application of evolutionary biology to social phenomena (such as capitalism, imperialism, racism or war) from the great materialist scientific breakthrough that was Darwin’s theory of evolution. This is especially important in the face of today’s

right-wing religious attacks (“intelligent design”) on evolutionary theory.

A READER

CHALLENGE comments: Thanks to “A Reader” for pointing out the possible false impression about PLP’s approach towards Darwin’s theory. We agree with Karl Marx that Darwin’s contribution to natural science was one of the most important advances ever made. The above letter also explains natural selection very clearly. One additional point: all of us, Darwin included, are influenced by the society in which we live, and our ideas are, in part, shaped by the nature of our social relationships. All of us, both individually and collectively, must intensively wage the struggle to overcome capitalist ideas every day of our lives. Darwin reflected the capitalist ideas of Victorian England not in his explanation of evolution, or even of natural selection as the main mechanism of evolution, but rather in the incidental point he advanced about the “survival of the fittest,” as the article “What Will Science Be Like Under Communism” explains.

Airport Workers Fight Anti-Immigrant Racism

Citizen and immigrant airport workers in SEIU passed a resolution condemning our governor’s racist anti-immigrant campaign, begun a month ago to justify racist cut-backs. Utilizing false data from the Center for Immigration Education, a racist think-tank used by the fascist Minutemen, the governor wants all state and local police to ask Latino workers about their immigration status whenever they have contact with them.

This is fascism. The state government wants to criminalize a whole group of workers. Already the racist airport police have started asking Latino airport workers if they’re legal residents. There is much post-9/11 anti-immigrant racism at the airport. With the Department of Homeland Security things could get worse.

Our union resolution not only calls the governor a racist, but supports recent anti-racist struggles from the Hurricane Katrina victims to the rebellions of African and Arab youth in France. Capitalist bosses need racism worldwide to make super-profits off of workers, be they African, Arab, Latino, or Asian. That’s why PLP is building an international communist movement. Only communist revolution can eliminate racism. We’re trying to increase the distribution of CHALLENGE among workers who support the resolution and spread the fight against anti-immigrant racism throughout the airport and into our communities. This is a racist attack on all workers.

AIRPORT RED

Revolutionary History 1912-1917: Reactionaries Still No Match for Factory Networks Built Over Time

Time and time again the Bolshevik party would turn to their factory cells to weather reactionary storms. Russian historian Alexander Rabinowitch reports that Lenin told Central Committee members in mid-July 1917, during a period of intense reaction following a failed insurrection earlier that month, to focus on the factory-shop committees (“The Bolsheviks Come to Power”). Russia was at war with Germany. The Russian government and nearly all the national and local papers accused the Bolsheviks of being “German agents.” Despite this torrent of abuse by the rulers and the acquiescence of all the so-called left parties, “among factory workers resentment toward the Party was limited and from the onset did not last long.”

The base held firm because it was built around the politics and networks of the newspaper Pravda (the successor to Iskra).

A. Badayev, the Bolshevik representative in the Fourth State Duma (parliament) in 1912, explained in his memoir (“The Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma”) how that worked. He was a candidate in a workers district, essentially to be elected by factory workers. His name could “not [be] published before the election day in order to avoid exposing the candidate[s] to the risk of arrest.”

“The election campaign had to be organized from underground.... During the elections the Bolsheviks possessed a powerful weapon.... Pravda.... The role play by Pravda during the elections was enormous. The paper fought against... the liberal bourgeoisie and the ‘non-party’ attitude which is so harmful...

“Beginning in June 1912, the pages of Pravda were filled with articles, notes, correspondence, etc., bearing on the approaching elections.... Pravda called on each of its readers to secure not less than three voters from his comrades at the bench....

“The law prohibited any workers’ election meetings. Under such conditions Pravda acquired especially great importance.”

“Sight unseen,” as it were, the workers responded to the Bolsheviks’ socialist politics. No wonder the first thing the government did during the reactionary days of July 1917 was to smash the Party press and ban the “Bolshevik newspaper from all theaters of military operation.”

The plan didn’t work. The Party made sure the press was up and running within a few weeks, using leaflets in the interim. The soldiers’ paper returned to publication even sooner.

Ultimately, workers, like those in the Putilov works, toiled 24 hours a day providing arms and weapons to the tens of thousands that emptied the factories to defend the revolution. When these proletarians joined forces with revolutionary soldiers and their allies, nothing on earth could stop them. The factory networks organized around the Party newspaper had certainly proved their worth. ☸

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS

Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Dems just want to polish up Fed snooping

The antiterrorism law...expanded the government’s investigative powers after the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Administration and Congressional officials said they expected a compromise on the renewal bill in coming weeks between the White House and members of both parties....

Senator Charles E. Schumer, the New York Democrat who said he voted to block permanent renewal of the act in part because of the revelations about the spying program, said Tuesday that there was room for a deal.

“Look,” Mr. Schumer said, “this is one that should be able to be worked out because the sides are relatively close.” (NYT, 1/4)

Behind 'ethnic' wars is oil or mineral \$\$

Civil wars are much more likely in countries with oil or other mineral wealth....

The leaders of insurgent armies certainly magnify ethnic grievances as part of their grab for spoils, but sectarian hatred usually isn’t sufficient to start civil wars. These wars are started by local elites that are essentially making an investment. They decide to commit violence now in the hopes of grabbing great wealth later. The people who do the killing might be whipped up by ethnic grievances, but the people who lead the civil wars are usually rational and greedy. (NYT, 12/18)

Spy bio shows US plots vs. worlds rebels

[CIA Agent] Edward Lansdale...during the cold war... was the Zelig of Washington’s global counterinsurgency effort, squelching a rebellion in the Philippines, plotting the overthrow of Fidel Castro in Cuba and blocking a potential Communist takeover of Vietnam in the first days of America’s

involvement....

In 1950, Lansdale was sent to the Philippines to quell a growing Communist insurgency. There, he orchestrated what one journalist

later called “a brilliantly led counterrevolution,”....

“Do what you did in the Philippines,” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles told Lansdale before sending him to Vietnam in 1954. “Lansdale went to play an immense role in creating and maintaining the new regime headed by Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam....”

John Kennedy thought of Lansdale as America’s James Bond, and in the early 60’s Robert Kennedy put him in charge of Operation Mongoose, a fantastical \$50 million plan to topple Castro....

Lansdale flickered on in the public consciousness after Vietnam, providing counsel to Oliver North in his effort to aid the contras in Nicaragua....

Some two decades after Lansdale’s death in 1987, the flawed assumptions that guided his thinking still thrive. Just ask the American pundits and policy makers fond of calling people like the former Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi the “George Washington of Iraq....” (NYT, 1/15)

China kills ‘wonders’ of barefoot-doctor days

China’s economic reforms have turned an almost uniformly poor nation into an increasingly prosperous one in the space of a mere generation. But the collapse of socialized medicine and staggering cost increases have opened a yawning gap between health care in the cities and the rural areas, where the former system of free clinics has disintegrated....

Until the beginning of the reform period in the early 1980’s, China’s socialized medical system, with “barefoot doctors” at its core, worked public health wonders.



From 1952 to 1982 infant mortality fell from 200 per 1,000 live births to 34, and life expectancy increased from about 35 years to 68, according to a recent study published by The New England Journal of Medicine. (NYT, 1/14)

Texas Rev. says US has slid into fascism

Listen to the Rev. Davison Loehr. A Vietnam veteran and graduate of Chicago Divinity School, Loehr is senior minister at the First Universalist Church in Austin. That’s Austin, Texas!

Loehr may be among the first ministers to use the f-word. In his new book, America, Fascism, + God: Sermons from a Heretical Preacher, he does not mince words. His Nov 7, 2004 sermon warns:

“You may wonder why anyone would use the word ‘fascism’ in a serious discussion of where America is today. ...I don’t mean it as name-calling at all. I mean to persuade you that the style of governing into which America has slid is most accurately described as fascism, and that the necessary implications of this fact are rightly regarded as terrifying.” (Dolph Honicker: Pythian Press)

The movie is quite gripping. Scenes and plot lines cut in on each other in an almost random manner, supposedly representing the chaos and unpredictability characterizing the conflicts surrounding the control of Mid-East oil. A slogan of the movie, "Everything is connected," emphasizes that what happens on the ground (i.e., war or even assassinations) results from what happens in the courts, the state and the boardrooms. It requires work to follow the film, warning us up to the fact that it requires work to understand the situation in the Mid-East.

Perhaps the most compelling plot line surrounds Pakistani youth who are laid off by the evil new mega-corporation and are seduced by Islamic fundamentalists with shady ties to an oil-rich royal family. The stories of these workers are told with a surprising humanity that borders (gasp) on a lack of racism. That is saved for the Matt Damon character's relationship with an "enlightened" royal (more below).

Poison #1: An oldy but goody — the myth of the “honorable cop.” The viewer is left with a hope that a horribly corrupt system can be saved if only the “right people” are



Poison #2: Arabs are ruled by incompetent, wasteful and stupid royal families and deserve to be ruled by Westernized comprador [local pro-imperialist boss] elements that will bring “democracy,” “market efficiency” and “stability” to the region while maintaining enough Muslim veneer and social spending to keep Bin Laden’s recruitment in check. In the vein of classic racist colonialist claptrap, dating back to Rudyard Kipling, it takes a brilliant white economic adviser (Matt Damon) to lead a Western-educated emir’s son by the hand along the road to liberal capitalist nirvana.

For all of its weaknesses, *Syriana* is an important film to discuss with workers and students. It can be a launching pad for PL's politics; we need to emphasize the idea that the only way to destroy the society represented in the movie is by workers organizing together worldwide to destroy ALL the bosses internationally and create a world controlled by workers: communism.

UNDER COMMUNISM...

(Part 2 described the struggle for recognition of equality by women combat pilots. This final part describes solidarity between the women and men. Quotes from Anne Noggle's "A Dance With Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II.")

“An airwave lifted us, and I managed to glide back over the river to the neutral zone. The Germans could see us in that zone and went on firing at us. We got out of the cockpit with difficulty, because both of us were wounded. Large splinters were sticking out of my body. My navigator was wounded in the neck. We walked very slowly toward the hills where our troops were supposedly located.

“A sentry came out of the darkness and questioned us in a thick Kazakh accent. Larisa replied in shock ‘Are you Russian or German?’ And they were Russian! We were taken to their dugout. I had a piece of shrapnel sticking out of my arm, and one of the soldiers tried to pull [it] out with pliers, but he couldn’t.

Another woman recounted, “[During a mission] I saw our commander wounded in his chest and right arm. I couldn’t hold the control stick — it was beyond my physical capacity. I dashed to the flight engineer for help, but he was on the floor, bleeding from six bullet wounds. We touched the ground — our commander was barely conscious but still managed to control the plane. I can hardly account of how I energized myself to drag our commander out through the hatch, but I did.

"Months later, this commander transferred me to Kiev toward the end of the war because our regiment was attacked again and again, and on each flight we returned with bullet holes in the fuselage. He made this decision because he felt that he bore responsibility for my life; he was saving me from a wild bullet. I sobbed for several days, not only because I was losing my crew but because I would never cross the front again."

Finally, we've seen how all this occurred despite the weaknesses in this first historic attempt to destroy capitalism — weaknesses such as maintaining the wage system and elitist inequalities, that eventually led the Soviet Union back to capitalism, rather than on to communism.

Today's international working class has the benefit of their gigantic achievements and, through PLP's contributions, an understanding of the weaknesses. PLP will fight to guarantee that communism will ultimately seize a permanent hold throughout the world. 🌍

In Memoriam: Mary Finney

Mary first joined the Party in 1971. We met at a time when she was fighting the welfare department to get child care for her kids. She had been told she was “\$5 over the eligibility limit.” Mary had recently lost her first husband; he died in an accident while driving a truck. Party members joined Mary in confronting welfare officials about this unjust denial. Suddenly, Mary and her family were “eligible” after all.

Some of her main qualities testify to why she became involved, then active. Mary had a wonderful heart. She wanted the best for other people, and she always put herself second to the needs of others. Once, when a Party member visited her in her small apartment, Mary had taken in three people newly arrived from Haiti. Without resources, they had knocked on her door. Mary let them spend the night.

Mary was always a hard worker, holding many different jobs in her life, from factories like Arts Metal in Newark to her work as a home health aide in Bergen County. She worked until she was too

As was said at her funeral, Mary wanted a better world for every worker on earth. She knew it would take a decisive revolutionary struggle by millions of people to achieve it. She tried to stay in that struggle herself, before the pres-



Despite all the stresses confronting her, Mary never, ever lost sight of the goal of communism. Towards the end of her life, she rededicated herself to that struggle. One of her last political acts was to attend a May Day celebration in New York City. Finally, Mary was victimized by the oppressive system she fought so hard to change.

No one should have had to go through the hard times and suffering that Mary experienced, especially toward the end of her life. And when we achieve the world for which Mary and so many others like her have fought, no one will.

(Ed. Note: Much of the above eulogy was delivered at Mary's funeral service, attended by 250 people at the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Newark, NJ.) ☺